Air Pollution in Metropolitan Cities

7660. SHRI IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to tackle on a war-footing the air pollution which is turning the capital virtually into a gas chamber;

(b) whether the level of emission of toxic gases such as carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and various oxides of nitrogen has steeply shot up; and

(c) if so, what adequate measures are being taken by Government to control air pollution in all the metropolitan cities in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) The Government has constituted a High-Powered Committee to prepare a comprehensive action plan for environment and pollution control in Delhi.

(b) Ambient air quality data of Delhi indicates that levels of carbon monoxide and oxides of nitrogen are beyond the prescribed limits in some traffic intersections/locations in Delhi with a high traffic density. Levels of Sulphur Dioxide are within prescribed limits.

(c) The measures being taken up by the Government to control air pollution in the metropolitan cities include the following:

(i) Standards for ambient air qulaity have been notified.

(ii) A network of ambeint air quality stations have been set up.

(iii) Emission norms for both petrol and diesel driven vehicles have been notified under the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 and these are under implementation from 1990. The various State Transport Directorates have been advised to enforce these standards.

(iv) The lead content in petrol has been brought down to a national average of 0.18 gramme per litre. It is proposed to reduce them further.

(v) Public awareness campaigns have been launched on various measures to prevent and control pollution from vehicles.

(vi) More stringent norms for vehicular emissions have been notified under the Central Motor Vehicles Rules in September 1993 which would come into effect from 1996.

(vii) Automobile manufacturers have been asked to develop and improve their technology to meet the more stringent standards for emission from vehicles.

(viii) City planners are advised to incorporate in their plans the long term requirements of city transportation.

Steps taken to prevent pollution of drinking water

7661. SHRI S. MADHAVAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representation about the pollution of drinking water due to the seepage of salt water from the prawn farms in Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu State;

(b) whether it is a fact that more and more prawn farms are coming up in the coastal belt of Thanjavur district;

(c) whether it is also a fact that more and more paddy fields are being converted into prawn farms in this area; and

(d) what steps have been taken to prevent pollution of drinking water?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) No, Sir. The Government have not received any such representation. However, there is likelihood of seepage of salt water from the prawn farms over a

period of time; unless the ponds are properly lined.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Prawn farms need State Pollution Control Board's consent to establish and operate, and the board can lay down appropriate conditions to prevent seepage of salt water into the adjoining ground water tables.

Water cess is chargeable on the sea water pumped into prawn farms and this acts as a disincentive to the excessive use of sea water for prawn cultivaiton.

Proposals pending under Forests (Conservation) Act, 1980

7662. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 202 given in the Rajya Sabha on 23rd February, 1994 and state:

(a) the number of proposals which are pending under Forests (Conservation) Act with reasons therefor; and

(b) what steps have been taken up Government so that development projects are not held up because of the procedural delays under the Forests (Conservation) Act?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) As on 31.5.1994, 143 proposals were pending with the Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. These proposals were pending at various stages of examination in accordance with provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, Forest (Conservation) Rules, 1981 and guidelines issued thereon.

(b) After discussing the issue in various fora including the State Forest Minister's Conference held during February 1992, it was decided to further decentralise and streamline examination of proposals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Accordingly, Forest (Conservation) Rules, 1981 have been suitably amended on 21.5.1992 and revised consolidated guidelines for examination of proposals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 have been issued on 25.10.1992. Revised consolidated guidelines interalia include delegation of powers to Regional Chief Conservator of Forests to finally decide proposals involving diversion of forest land upto 5 ha. excluding proposals in respect of regularisation of encroachments and mining and initial examination of all proposals involving diversion of forest land upto 20 ha. It also provides for relaxation in the norms of raising of compensatory afforestation over non forest land for certain categories of proposals.

Forest Cover in the Country

7663. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 204 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 23rd February, 1994 and state:

(a) what is the percentage of forest cover at present in Uttar Pradesh; and

(b) how does it compare with other states in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) As per the State of Forest Report 1993 of the Forest Survey of India, the actual forest cover of the State of Uttar Pradesh is 11.5% of the total geographical area of the State.

(b) A comparative statement of the percentage of forest area of various States/UT's annexed.